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SHAKESPEARE IN RECENT YEARS

I. HIS RELATION TO HIS PREDECESSORS¹

With the revival of interest in a more distinctively literary study on a sound basis in our colleges and universities throughout the western world—a study necessarily profoundly affected by the broad principles now underlying the pursuits of philology, history, philosophy and science—it has been inevitable that Shakespeare, the chief dramatic interpreter of the thoughts and emotions of this western world, should become the subject of renewed inquiry and discussion. Indeed, so great has been this output that it is with some temerity that one even announces a paper on Shakespeare. I shall merely plead as *my* excuse a genuine interest in the subject born of a study existing and increasing now consciously through twenty years; and similarly, I believe I may count on a degree of intimacy and interest in others. Paradoxical or not, this very familiarity contributes a chief reason for writing on these matters.

But if Shakespeare has become more and more a subject of academic study, he is becoming less and less a tradition for the English and American stage and playworld. Mr. Sidney Lee's latest book on "Shakespeare and the Modern Stage" would imply that it is requiring serious effort in Great Britain to restore Shakespeare to what Mr. Lee considers his theoretically deserved place in popular esteem and to win general practical acceptance for the recognition of the poet's educational value. We hear from many sides, as from Mr. Bernard Shaw and the Russian novelist, Tolstoy, that Shakespeare is entirely overrated. A stay in New York for several weeks at the height of the theatrical season usually displays the fact that no Shakespearean play at all is regularly before the public in that city. Two houses of grand opera in full blast—in the belief that New York can support what no other city on earth attempts—musical concerts without number, unlimited vaudeville, but in genuine theatrical

¹ The material for this and the paper to follow was used in lectures before the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, in January, 1907.

work only a sprinkling of nondescript representations, seem to be what the American public, judged by the New York standard, is demanding, or is at least paying for. The Ben Greet Company well nigh alone may be excepted. This company has been travelling among our universities and smaller cities in the South and West, presenting the morality of "Everyman" and sundry plays of Shakespeare with a simplicity and a naturalness suggestive of the Elizabethan spirit.

Every age and generation has its own way of looking at things: demands its new and personal interpretation of a philosophy of literature and of life. Like the continued recurrence of spring-time and youth, the mystery is ever new and never ceases to surprise. Each one must interpret a piece of literature in his own modes of thought, must experience its enjoyment and derive its lessons for himself. The really great masters in literature — and they are necessarily very few — are great just in that they divined and expressed life in such large measure as to give something, and never the same thing, to each age and generation, to every student of literature anywhere.

Three such names the ancient Greeks undoubtedly furnished: Homer, if we may still unite under one name the racial genius that produced the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; Æschylus, the author of the *Agamemnon* trilogy and the *Prometheus*; and Sophocles, the portrayer of *Œdipus's* agony and *Antigone's* calm despair. Our modern age — and this is the glory of our Mother Country and the British race — furnished certainly one, and perhaps but one: the creator of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Mercutio*; of *Shylock* and *Portia*; of *Richard III* and *Henry V*; of *Bully Bottom* and *Falstaff* and *Dogberry* and *Touchstone* and the *Fool* in "*Lear*;" of *Beatrice* and *Rosalind* and *Viola*; of *Brutus*, of *Hamlet*, and *Othello*, and *Iago*, of *Lear* and *Edmund*, of *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth*, of *Antony* and *Cleopatra*, of *Ophelia*, *Desdemona*, and the *Lady Cordelia*, of *Imogen*, of *Prospero* — but where shall we end? The *Prospero-Shakespeare* has minted so many fresh coins from his brain to be current among mankind!

I have used advisedly the term "creator." For this act approaches most nearly that of divinity itself. He made man in His own image: He created the living soul. We do not speak of

Falstaff, Hamlet, Iago, Cleopatra, as types, generic of a class. We mean Falstaff, Hamlet, Iago, Cleopatra themselves, portrayed in all their complexity. Your lesser writers, even of as great magnitude as Charles Dickens, deal in types. But Divinity creates the individual, and can go no farther.

From this point of view in our English literature, perhaps Chaucer alone approaches most nearly to the first great class of poets, makers or creators. The tragedy of "Troilus and Criseyde" stirred with profound pity through its story of unhappy love two hundred years before "Romeo and Juliet." For I still must adhere rather to Professor Price's delicate interpretation printed ten years ago in the Publications of the Modern Language Association, than accept the attempt of Professor Cook, of Yale, at a recent meeting of this Association, at an extreme modification of this view, where Chaucer's Criseyde was reduced to a mere wanton. It seems to me that this latter conception leaves out the very thing in dispute — the literary quality — the delicacy of insight, the interpretative power of a master-poet. I think we may accept, too, that the dramatic genius that created the Wife of Bath was not only of a high order, but not far below that which produced Falstaff himself.

In other literatures, whom shall we name? Some deny this first great position to Dante, the chief poet of mediævalism, as too subjective and egoistic despite all his populating of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. Many likewise deny the first of all positions to Milton, the creator of Satan; although a very good friend of mine, and a great lover of poetry, places him at the head of all English poetry. The answer depends not a little on our conception of what poetry is or should be, and the place of the *made epic* in its relation to the *drama* in literary art.

The lyric singers with their outbursts of the glorified Me are in still another class — except in the Hebrew Psalter, where the worship of Jehovah lifts the speaker and singer far beyond himself into the heights of a glorified ecstasy.

Shall we include Molière, who has best expressed the racial genius of the French people? Shall we then name the German Goethe, who a hundred years before anticipated so much of the critical and scientific intellectual habit of the nineteenth and

twentieth centuries? Shall we name the lone figure of Don Quixote in Spanish literature, the contemporary of Falstaff, lingering between the eve of mediævalism and the dawn of modernity, which laughed Spain's chivalry away? Diverse answers may come from different sources.

The great difference in the present approach to Shakespeare from that of former days is the contributory light which is thrown upon him. The poet is studied not only for and in himself, but in the light of his predecessors and contemporaries, and these in view of a world movement. This does not mean any the less intimate study of the poet's work in and for itself; but a wider knowledge, a greater intelligence, and larger sympathies have become associated with that closer study. We wonder no less at the intellectual power and poetic imagination which produced the work; but we are able to trace better the normal processes by which that genius developed. Shakespeare becomes removed from the position of a fetich, and is chiefly the constructive artist working in a dramatic medium.

We do not expect to find a great mountain peak rising isolated out of a low-lying plain, but approached by a broken and undulating country. Shakespeare had his predecessors like Lyly, Greene, Peele, Kyd, Marlowe; contemporaries like Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Chapman, Middleton, Heywood and Dekker; followers like Massinger and Webster. The Elizabethan age was one of intense poetic and dramatic activity. Coming after the physical and mental unrest of the reigns of Henry VIII and Mary, it was one of rich, full, pulsating life. This corresponding movement in literature found its best expression in dramatic form. Everybody seemed to be a dramatist, as in our degenerate days everybody has written fiction. And Shakespeare was the highest fulfillment of this best expression of the life and thought of his day. Or to state it differently in a sentence somewhat adapted: The greatest glory of England is her literature, and the greatest glory of her literature is its poetry, and the greatest glory of her poetry is its dramatic rather than its epic and lyric triumphs; and the greatest dramatist — among this set of remarkable men who have been too far unknown to the general reader — is Shakespeare.

But let us leave externals and come to a discussion of the plays themselves. We know well that Shakespeare did not invent new forms, any more than he usually invented his plots. He merely transcended other men's work by the power, glow, and vigor of his imagination. Before Shakespeare there were comedies like Lyly's, stilted and affected though they were; there were Chronicle or History Plays like Peele's "Edward I," Greene's "James IV," Marlowe's "Edward II," and the anonymous "Edward III;" Romantic Plays, again like Greene's "James IV;" examples of bombast like Peele's "Battle of Alcazar," Greene's "Alphonsus of Arragon" and Marlowe's "Tamburlaine;" Tragedies of Blood like Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy" and Marlowe's "Jew of Malta." Before Shakespeare wrote "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucrece" there were narrative poems like those of Spenser, Lodge's "Glaucus and Scilla," Daniel's "Complaint of Rosamond," and Marlowe's "Hero and Leander." Before Shakespeare's essays in the Sonnet, there had been not only Wyatt and Surrey, who introduced the form to English literature, but Sidney's "Astrophel and Stella," long the model for a sonnet sequence on unhappy love, with its countless imitators.

It is well, too, to remember the tremendous influence of the Continental literatures on the Elizabethan, for it is only by degrees that we have come to realize the importance of their study as bearing on this subject. In an age of travel accompanying the Revival of Letters and the Renaissance, England knew French and Italian literatures fairly well, and not a little of the more remote Spanish and German. Latin — however carelessly learned and used — was still the universal tongue of the school and of all education; and Greek had begun to exert its influence on the universities. Most of these influences met in greater or less degree, directly or indirectly, in Shakespeare, as the creature of his age. So vividly Italian does the dramatist seem at times that some think he must have visited Italy — the Northern Italy of Lombardy and Venetia, of Milan and Verona and Mantua and Padua and Venice. He does not describe so closely the Italy further South — Tuscany, Rome, and the Two Sicilies. The French conversations in "Henry V," and French phrases and sentences scattered through the plays, make it probable that

their author knew a sort of Anglo-French, picked up in the streets and taverns of London which still held close relations with the neighboring French coast. He did not know German. I recall now only one German expression in the plays: "*Lustique*, as the Dutchman says," in "All's Well," II, iii, 37.

He must have known of Lyly's Latin Accidence which he ridiculed in the "Merry Wives," and have read some of the stories of Ovid and picturesque portions of Vergil — tale-tellers who were favorites during the Middle Age and far into the period of the Renaissance. Perhaps, too, he was acquainted somewhat with Livy, the popular Latin historian, and naturally had read a play or two of Plautus and of Seneca, in a day of classical imitative impulse. A Stratford Grammar School-boy would at least know something of Latin, if he knew anything. There were then no courses to divert his attention like our present day English, History, and Higher Mathematics in American preparatory schools, the examinations in which, for entrance to college, I am sure Shakespeare could not have passed.

We can now better understand how Shakespeare entered upon his career of dramatist. Becoming connected somehow with the theatre, he practised his 'prentice hand in working over old plays. He doubtless at first attempted no more than to make a play go better and be more actable — attract a bigger public, and bring more silver into the receipt-box. He must have turned instinctively to scenes which contained dramatic possibilities and have developed those, perhaps leaving many portions of the old play as it was. At length, while still making use of older material, whether in a crude play already existing or in a story-book, he seized upon the dramatic possibilities of a situation and of a character, and wrote the play from start to finish. Yet, never did the dramatist give up his early habit of helping out an old play and making it more probable by touching up certain scenes or rewriting them entirely afresh, leaving the rest of the play to some colleague. It was a method perhaps inseparable from the theatrical exigencies of the day. This seems the best way to explain at later and very different stages of his work the inequalities and deficiencies in such a variety of plays as "The Taming of the Shrew," "Timon of Athens," "Pericles," and

perhaps "Henry VIII." It is extremely doubtful that "The Two Noble Kinsmen," the first act of which some have supposed to be Shakespeare's and the rest continued and completed by John Fletcher, is in any part Shakespeare's at all.

Not enough has yet been investigated concerning this connection of Shakespeare's plays with his predecessors and his contemporaries, and with much of the older Elizabethan and Continental material. The dramatist in the past has been studied too far by himself and for himself. A beginning, however, is being made and a better opportunity offered, by the new editions of Elizabethan dramatists and contemporary documents undertaken by the Oxford and Cambridge and other Presses.

Nearly all the first plays of Shakespeare had prototypes: a ground plan that the dramatist worked upon. There was an old play on the victories of Talbot over the French, retold in "I Henry VI." There were old plays on the bloodshedding in the Wars of the Roses, recounted in "II and III Henry VI;" more than one old play, indeed, existed on the popular conception of the hump-backed, bloody Richard III. Plautus had an old play, the *Menæchmi*, on the confusion of two brothers; on this seems to have been built an old Elizabethan play, "The Historie of Error;" and this in turn became the ground work for Shakespeare's "The Comedy of Errors." An old double play, "The Troublesome Raigne of King John" in ten acts, or two parts, was the basis of Shakespeare's single play of "King John." There was possibly an older play on the subject of the deposed King "Richard II," and a wretched piece, "The Famous Victories of Henry V," suggested points to all three plays containing Prince Hal: both parts of "Henry IV" and "Henry V." Maybe there was an older play on Shylock, the Jew of Venice. Beyond question an older play explains much that is otherwise inexplicable in the Tragedy of Blood, "Titus Andronicus." There was an older "Hamlet" play with the ghost and all the other disturbing improbabilities, and it has been guessed, with some degree of assurance, that the writer of this old play was Thomas Kyd, the author of "The Spanish Tragedy."

I emphasize this phase of Shakespeare's early work, because it is just here that the most insoluble problems occur in connec-

tion with the history and development of Shakespeare's art. To me the periods of Shakespeare's work that have proved most rewarding, are two: that of the plays which traces the beginnings and growth of the dramatist's art, and that which displays his greatest achievement in comedy and tragedy.

In this work of revamping old stuff and improving old themes, it seems natural to suppose that Shakespeare began with the older chronicle form of play and the traditions of classical comedy and tragedy. Such a theory best explains what is perhaps the greatest *crux* in Shakespeare — the relation of "II and III Henry VI" to the two older plays, their originals, viz.: "The Contention Between the Two Houses of York and Lancaster," and the "True Tragedie of Richard, Duke of York," and the relation of all four of these, still further, to "I Henry VI" and "Richard III." The inextricable confusion can only be explained, it seems to me, by a reference to this process of working over old plays. While the theory may not be proved at every point, it is one of which I have become fairly convinced and upon which I have had the hardihood to write more than once.

The problem is this. We have six plays. There has been some to doubt that they are Shakespeare's at all — yet Shakespeare seems to have had a good deal to do with every one of the six. The subject of the Wars of the Roses was an interesting and a vital one historically, and from the point of view of the popular Tragedy of Blood was also essentially dramatic. There must have been originally an old play or plays on this subject — before Shakespeare engaged with the material at all. This original matter Shakespeare, most probably with others, worked over into the two plays existing in quarto form: "The Contention Between the Two Houses of York and Lancaster" and the "True Tragedie of Richard, Duke of York." Note the expression, "*True Tragedie*," implying that there was another inferior version and perhaps a rival performance by a theatrical company on the next block. I believe, consequently, that in these two plays, "The Contention" and the "True Tragedie," while not wholly, and possibly not largely, Shakespeare's, we have incorporated the oldest and first specimens of his work to be found.

A very little later it dawned upon the dramatist, that this material could be used to still further advantage. He could develop these two plays on the Wars of the Roses, prefix a play and affix a play — material for which already existed in previous plays — and connect all four, thus resulting into a tetralogy on the unfortunate reign of Henry VI, crowned by the figure of the wicked monster, whom these dissensions had generated, Richard III.

Whatever part of the original plays "The Contention" and the "True Tragedie," and even of the new plays thus produced, may have been by others — Peele, Lodge, or even Greene and Marlowe — the new conception of an historic tetralogy seems to have been that of one mind, and this one mind to have been Shakespeare's. The one name that emerges and certainly had a hand in them, though all four of the pieces were probably composite, as described, is Shakespeare's. All the changes, heightening, developing, expanding, seem to have this one object in view. An old play existed on Talbot's victories over the French; it could be reduced and altered. The events were those of the early days of Henry VI. It is only necessary to heighten the parts dealing with Talbot's bravery, lengthen the pathetic business of the death of Talbot and his young son into a lyrical outburst, introduce Henry VI as an ineffective young king just coming of age, indicate the beginning of the Wars of the Roses in the delightful scene of the plucking of the white and red roses in the Temple Garden — for whose can such poetry be save Shakespeare's, even at the beginning of his art? Finally, add the wooing of Margaret by Suffolk for his king (and for himself) as a good curtain — and there you are! The play is done and you may label it "I Henry VI" and let it precede the other two old quarto plays on the Wars of the Roses.²

The Margaret Episode at the end of "I Henry VI" leads us to expect more — for it is unmistakably inserted at the close with this intention. It introduces a new element and serves as a transition to the following parts. The figure of Margaret is

² My arguments for this were stated some years ago in a paper in the Publications of the Modern Language Association entitled "The Episodes in 'I Henry VI.'"

the one character that is in all four plays of the tetralogy — from first to last. By a fictitious device — undoubtedly, it seems to me, the work of Shakespeare — Margaret appears in all four plays, unhistorically, it is true, but, dramatically, very effective: in the first two as a lover; in the last two, Cassandra-like, heaping curses and prophesying doom.

With the old Talbot play thus converted into a Henry VI play and this introduction now called "I Henry VI" completed, the dramatist returned to the old plays of "The Contention" and "The True Tragedie," dealing with the Wars of the Roses, in which it is most probable Shakespeare already had a decisive share. What would he now do? Why, naturally take these two plays with their excellent dramatic raw material, and in the light of "I Henry VI," develop them, extend them, expand them, intensify their dramatic and lyrical notes, and thus expanded and intensified call them "II and III Henry VI," respectively.

The two plays contain plenty of good stuff. Thus, the dying words of the conscience-stricken Cardinal Beaufort:

Comb down his hair: look, look! it stands upright,
Like lime-twigs set to catch my wingèd soul.
Give me some drink. . . .

And Warwick comments:

See how the pangs of death do make him grin!

Already in "III Henry VI" the deformed, hump-backed Richard is characterized by his monologue form:

I have no brother, I am like no brother,
And this word 'love' which grey beards call divine,
Be resident in men like one another
And not in me: I am myself alone.

The true conception is already there, and forthwith a final fourth play is appended: "Richard III." Richard had been the subject, seemingly, of more than one play before; but this is the first indication of any consistent psychological conception of the character. Many hands may have dealt with the original dramatic material in the four plays; but it seems that no one but Shakespeare — the same conscious artist, who developed later

into the creator of Hamlet, Iago, Othello and Lear — planned putting these four plays together into a sequence and one consistent whole with their fitting culmination in the imperious Richard. The characteristic psychology of the later plays may be already discerned in the earlier ones. Here are the definite marks of Shakespearean tragedy near its beginning. As in the later plays, there is the conflict between forces — a great waste of heroic qualities, courage, determination, great will — and somehow something that impels our sympathy. The tremendous will-power and the splendid audacity in courting Lady Anne is the justification of what would otherwise be an improbable and painful scene. The self-control in chasing away the visions of the night which are troubling a haunted conscience; the dying a death grandly and bravely on the battlefield worthy of a better cause — these qualities call forth admiration, even with a natural detestation of Richard's character. Full of crudities, irrelevances these four early history plays naturally are; they reveal their mixed origin and complex nature, indicate that they rest on other plays and contain elements we may accept as un-Shakespearean; but they show, too, the process of beginning, growing, strengthening work; characteristics that are later developed in the creation of the masterpieces of modern dramatic literature.

Another point anent the literary quality of "Richard III" may here be touched upon. It is in connection with the vexed relations of the quarto and the folio. The text of the English Globe and Cambridge editors, usually adopted without question, adheres in the main, as is known, to the quarto text, as an earlier version than that of the folio, and supposedly more nearly like Shakespeare's original manuscripts. Other editors like the American Richard Grant White, or the maker of the latest edition, Professor Neilson, in the American Cambridge Poets series, accept the folio copy of 1623 as a later, better and corrected form. The differences between the two views has been great and the discussion has sometimes degenerated into violent controversy. One point which seems to have escaped the advocates of one text or the other, I am convinced of. After going through hundreds upon hundreds of these variations — for they are legion—to my mind and to any literary feeling I possess, the

person who made many of these alterations from quarto to folio—often merely of a single word in a line—whether Shakespeare or not, was unquestionably a poet with distinctively subtle qualities. The Cambridge editors bluntly affirm that the quarto is probably from Shakespeare's copy. But may not the poet himself (for certainly it was some *poet*) have altered his own copy in the course of time to the great improvement of scores, nay hundreds, of lines? It will be found that change after change has been made to escape awkward iterations of words and syllables, to introduce a concrete or specific word in place of a general term, as *children* for *kindred* or *fathers* for *parents*, or to bring in an entirely new poetic idea. But the editors of the Cambridge text, having started off on a certain path in obedience to a theory, insistently keep it and will have none of these things.

It is, of course, beside the question, but I may frankly express the opinion for myself, that after working for some years over the variations between the quarto and folio copies of Shakespeare's plays and considering the number of misprints and errors in both, I am convinced that nothing like a perfect text of Shakespeare exists, nor in the nature of the case can very well exist. The elements that enter into the process are entirely too fanciful and subjective. None of the old copies is altogether trustworthy, and when we begin to alter, no two of us, for example, will agree as to the precise alteration to be made; nay, frequently, indeed, will not be even consistent in the treatment in different places of apparently the same phenomena.

This lack of consistency is the most grievous sin of all existing texts. Editors are capable of doing on one page what they calmly ignore on another. The English Globe and Cambridge text, generally accepted as the standard—and I shall not undertake to say any other is preferable—is open frequently to this charge of inconsistency from which all texts suffer; but to my feeling the Globe and Cambridge text is subject to the more damning fault of having been established by minds that, while remarkably accurate in details of textual criticism, seemingly had no adequate feeling for poetic distinction.

But we can see the beginner Shakespeare practising in Comedy and Tragedy no less than in the History Play. In perhaps the

latest edition of Shakespeare's plays, that of Professor Neilson in the American Cambridge Poets edition just mentioned, the editor has departed from the usual folio arrangement of the Comedies and the Tragedies, and has ventured to classify these according to content and to rearrange them in their presumed chronological order. In doing so he follows the traditional opinion that "Love's Labour's Lost" is Shakespeare's earliest Comedy. It may be so; but for a long time I have not been able to escape the feeling that much may be said for the "Comedy of Errors" being the first in point of time. Professor Baker, of Harvard, in his new book on Shakespeare's Growth as a Dramatist, places "Love's Labour's Lost" first and the "Comedy of Errors" later, on the ground of advance in dramatic structure. But this may easily be accounted for by the fact that in the "Errors" he was following an older construction, while "Love's Labour's Lost" is largely his own invention, and though later is structurally feebler, but in characterization is superior. In itself, it seems to me more natural that the dramatist in a first attempt should have followed older lines rather than have cut out for himself comparatively new paths.

Two plays of Plautus suggested the central episodes—the confusion of the two brothers, and the wife's dining with a stranger while the real husband beats in vain at the door outside for admittance. Upon this material seems to have been built the old play, the "Historie of Error," which Shakespeare used. Though this old play is known only by name and has long since disappeared, we can almost tell what it contained. It was probably originally downright crude and rough farce, some traits of which have been still retained. What Shakespeare did, as usual, even in his earliest period, was to add new elements, heighten the dramatic appeal, smooth roughnesses, and tone down violations of taste and even of morals. The shrewish wife is probably softened from a vixen; the whole courtesan business, no doubt elaborated in the original, is very much condensed, even to the point of obscurity; a stroke of genius adds another pair of twin brothers—the servants Dromio—making the laughable confusion between the two pairs, even as to one another, intricate beyond belief. I am, too, inclined to think, as everything

moves in pairs, that the charming sister, the first of Shakespeare's sensible, well-balanced women, was also created and added by the dramatist as a foil to the wife and mate for the brother. To distinguish the play further from its old form of absolute farce there is introduced the framework of the separated parents and children reunited in the end — a trait curiously enough revived and elaborated in all the latest plays of the dramatist's life: "Pericles," "Cymbeline," "Winter's Tale," and "The Tempest."

For the other two beginning comedies — "Love's Labour's Lost" and the "Two Gentlemen of Verona" — no original play is known to have existed. This, however, does not preclude the possibility of such older form, following the general method of work, and I am not sure that this was here also the case. In the "Two Gentlemen of Verona" there remains an echo of an older play, "Felismena," on a related subject. On the other hand, it may be said that perhaps in both these cases the dramatist tried to invent his own plots. Both plays deal incidentally with theories of right education — a young man's theories — that you cannot educate away from Nature, but only in recognition and in restraint of Nature's forces. Each is founded upon methods of the predecessors of Shakespeare — John Lyly and Robert Greene, respectively. "Love's Labour's Lost" is the best example in Shakespeare of the influence of Euphuism at the same time that it ridicules the extremes of Euphuism and preciosities of speech in the verbal extravagances of the preacher, the teacher, and the fantastical Spaniard — extravagances caught up and reflected ludicrously by the clown of the play. Alliterations, balanced forms of speech, word plays in great profusion, prose dialogue — all are in the manner of John Lyly — but the play echoes, too, other modes. The Spaniard is

A man in all the world's new fashion planted
That hath a mint of phrases in his brain.

But also the more serious and poetical portions of Biron and Rosaline, in the company of the King and Princess, are characterized by affectations:

Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise
Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation,
Figures pedantical. . . .

Biron declares,

I do forswear them.
Henceforth my wooing mind shall be express'd
In russet yeas and honest kersey noes.

Such a comedy is evidently no comedy of character, but a comedy of a young man's brilliant quips and words.

Controlled by the purists in speech, it has become the right sort of thing since Professor Clarence Child's admirable dissertation on "Euphuism," to limit the term specifically to the qualities and appearances in Lyly's work. But while we may well restrict the word to this special and technical sense, this usage has brought with it a considerable loss. There is needed another term to express the movement in English speech at the time—a necessary and on the whole beneficial movement both in its added refinements and in its extravagances—a vogue which Shakespeare's play illustrates as well as condemns. In the broader and more generic sense, Shakespeare's play of "Love's Labour's Lost" is at once an excellent example of the traits of a very real movement in the history of English speech at its finest, and a ridiculing of the same thing at its worst. The *very consciousness* of this, further inclines me to give a slightly later date to the play than is customary—and so to make it the second, or even more probably, the third, rather than the first of Shakespeare's comedies. The play is important as bearing upon the future development of Shakespeare's art; but especially so as illustrative of the dramatist's susceptibility to the influences of the times.

No less does the "Two Gentlemen of Verona" show a similar following of a fashion. This play is Shakespeare's first characteristically *romantic* play, as the wretched, but sweetly lyrical, Robert Greene had developed it before him. The reviewer in *The Nation*, of Mr. Churton Collins's new edition of Greene, has questioned Mr. Collins's statement of Shakespeare's indebtedness to Greene on the ground that it was nowhere to be proved. Maybe not. And yet I have long entertained the opinion that I found Mr. Collins holds, and must beg to dissent from the reviewers who demand mathematical demonstration. The romantic tangle of Love versus Friendship, the faithlessness and the

reconciliation, the disguises of the lady as a boy page (already to be found in *Lyly*), the Robin Hood-like outlaws, the absurdly weak ending — not caring how the play closed and who married whom, so long as the characters stood in pairs and effective groups for the ringing down of the curtain — all these are traits which recall qualities of Greene's work and tell of a poetical Shakespeare near the beginning of his art. Robert Greene was too positive a genius and prominent a figure for as skillful an adapter as William Shakespeare, beginner, wholly to pass by.

The beginnings of Shakespearean tragedy contain an even more instructive example of these origins. The Tragedy of Blood, so offensive to our nostrils and feeling, was a favorite product of Elizabeth's time. It was the physical as well as the psychical outcome of long decades of internecine war and religious persecution preceding Henry VIII's, Edward's, Mary's, and Elizabeth's reigns. Nor has the Anglo-Saxon mind ever wholly outgrown it. Our popular melodrama to-day—the-villain-still-pursued-her sort of plot—also the violent imaginings of children, even the background of a play like the much-talked-of "*Great Divide*," by Mr. Moody, are direct descendants and are of a kind. It is of pirates on the high seas and scalping Indians, bold banditti, they play. This sentence, already penned, has found delightful confirmation in the children's extravaganza, "*Peter Pan*," by Mr. Barrie, as played for two seasons in New York by Miss Maude Adams. Its appeal is essentially based upon fundamental and universal traits. A tub of water may become the ocean and a few chips and splinters rival navies afloat. This is the explanation of the success of the penny-dreadful and the old-fashioned dime novel, now adulterated and, like many other food products, marked down to a nickel.

"*Titus Andronicus*" is the first pure tragedy associated with Shakespeare's name. In details it is an unrelieved story of bloodshed and cruelty and horror, after the manner of the old tragedies of Seneca, so popular in the mind of the Renaissance and so abhorrent to us of to-day. There is murder, revenge, supernatural agency, and all the paraphernalia of the species. To an unprepared mind, who does not know the type, the play is simply awful—it reeks with blood, and strong tastes must

these sixteenth century Englishmen have had to accept and digest such meat. Many have doubted that Shakespeare, who later shows such rare delicacy in handling disagreeable subjects, could possibly, even in the crude period of youth, have written "Titus Andronicus." Like Falstaff, they argue, his 'instinct' would have preserved him. But contrary to former opinions, which compared the play only with Shakespeare's later work, independent of its evolution and surroundings, it is now generally believed that "Titus Andronicus" *is* Shakespeare's in this sense: it is an old play worked over and given new form by him. Its very extravagances bear the hallmark of his early period. Do you wish a bloody tragedy?—and sporting Kyd and Kit Marlowe had made the species a fine thing of thrill and shudder, with suicide, murder, rape, and ghosts. Do *you*, too, want a bloody tragedy, he seems to say to his theatre manager, and break up the rival show across the street? I shall let the blood flow in gallons.

There was more than one old play on the subject. You observe the Roman title—for Englishmen flattered themselves by locating the scenes of horrible plays in other lands than their own. The dramatist subjects this material to the process already described. An old German version and a Dutch version have been discovered—for the English actors were very popular on the Continent, in Holland and Germany and Austria, and carried these plays over with them. From these two Continental plays we can tell pretty well what the old play must have been like and what were Shakespeare's personal contributions. "The main features of the Shakespearean play which cannot be proved to have existed in the earlier dramas, are the rivalry between Saturninus and Bassianus for the throne, the funeral of Titus's sons killed in war; the sacrifice of Alarbus; the kidnapping of Lavinia by Bassianus, with the death of Mutius; the sending of young Lucius with presents to the sons of Tamora; and the banquet scene in III, ii, which appears only in the first folio and is perhaps a later addition"—(Neilson).

Leave out, if you can, in imagination, the foundation of the horrible plot which is not Shakespeare's. Accepting that—and there is proof that it was popular with strong Elizabethan tastes

—what would naturally a young poet make of it? You will observe at once the bountiful references to Nature and animal life, and the richness of poetic allusion. For instance:

Fresh tears stood on her cheeks, as doth the honey-dew
Upon a gathered lily almost wither'd.

Not the least good line is the one instanced by Burke in his "Essay on the Sublime and the Beautiful:"

When will this fearful slumber have an end?

Historically, "Titus Andronicus" is very important in Shakespearean evolution. It is a link between the murders and horrors of Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy" and the poet's own stupendous production of "Hamlet" in the plenitude of his powers, when he never worked better. For "Hamlet" belongs in every point of its origin to the type of the Tragedy of Blood. It is based upon an older play, "Hamlet," in the method described, and was due to a second revival of this species of bloody tragedy about 1600, midway in Shakespeare's career. Only the mature dramatist was prepared to make full use of his opportunity which he did not and could not before. This lost original "Hamlet" play is often referred to, and there can be no doubt of its existence. It seems very likely that it was one of Kyd's productions and it became the laughing-stock and butt of actors who ridiculed its absurd ghost crying like a fish-wife, "Hamlet, Revenge." This unpromising material Shakespeare seems to have taken hold of in the very wantonness of conscious mastery. We almost fancy him saying: See this fashion which is again current, observe this despised thing; and look at the rival concern across the street, with the flaring tallow-dips and burning tapers, trying to attract custom from us with a sensational play. This thing you have laughed at, I shall make you pause over. I see in it, ghost and all, not a tissue of absurdities, but possible agonizings which even question existence. Here it is — this *is* a play — a Tragedy of Blood, as it can be. Here is your ghost — preserved, and a real live one — though so cloaked about that, when at last he enters, you may well doubt, even in the First Act, his actual existence to any but Hamlet's excited brain.

Here are adultery, murder, madness, suicide, and deaths galore. I have let the curtain fall on a charnel house.

All are dead and murdered at the close, a full house: a sorry knave, Polonius, and his son and daughter; a King and a Queen, the father, "Hyperion to a Satyr," and Hamlet, "Take him for all in all, we shall not look upon his like again." Horatio alone remains:

Absent thee from felicity awhile
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story. . . .

begs the dying Hamlet. And his friend replies with a prescience of a better world, rare in Shakespeare's lines, who, absorbed in portraying his characters, conceals any personal thoughts of his own:

Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.

Mr. Bradley has happily remarked: "It is just what Hamlet never had and most needs — Rest!"

Let a college Freshman, as I experience almost every year, tell in his own words the unadorned plot and story of "Hamlet" — relieved of its magic of poetry and its depth of complex characterization — and you would still ridicule its possibilities, as much as the playwrights of old. Read the play for yourself, even despite this discouragement and distaste for literature your own students sometimes conspire to give you, and there is a feeling of awe — the purging pity and terror of Aristotle's definition. You have forgot the adultery, the blood-letting, the madness, and the suicide, the ghost and the deaths; you are left pondering over a tragedy of human character and human will. This tragic woe is not of the fall of Thebes or Pelops line, caused from without; but the actions and emotions of character spring from within the man himself and determine destiny. This is the transformation that is wrought by this maker of modern tragedy.

The two narrative poems, "Venus and Adonis," and "Lucrece," were just as imitative of a general manner and just as superior to that manner in their special characteristics. They were both dedicated to the Earl of Southampton in very interest-

ing prose dedications signed by Shakespeare and revealing an intimate personal touch. In both the youthful poet threw himself with accustomed ardor. Both poems doubtless had their origin in the demand of the young dandies about town, to the company of whom the young Earl belonged. In the sixteenth century, when "Venus and Adonis" appeared, it was thought to be a very pretty poem, and was so popular, it is said, that men went to sleep with the volume under their heads. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by a change in taste, the poem came to be thought immoral. Its latest editor, Mr. Sidney Lee, takes literally the statement "the first heire of my invention," and assigns the composition back to the Stratford days of the young poet. Personally, I must think that the phrase refers to the first endeavor of this kind that the poet had attempted — a continued narrative poem, as distinguished from his miscellaneous work and totally different dramatic performance based upon older material. The poem thus seems to me to belong to the period of early comedy and tragedy and to be blended with the spirit of both — a typical production of a luxuriant and youthful poetic imagination.

In our own superior and analytical generation, instead of exuberant poems, we have portentous examples of fiction like "Jude the Obscure," written by middle-aged men, without illusions — this novel, indeed, appearing as a serial in a popular American family magazine designed for home consumption. Perhaps some day this, too, may not be thought the healthiest reading *virginibus puerisque*.

The early Sonnets were all equally imitative of a fashion. Mr. Sidney Lee has done yeoman's service in unearthing the history and showing the vogue of the sonnet in Italy, in France, and in England. Likewise I can refer to an admirable paper on the same subject, "Foreign Influences on Shakespeare's Sonnets," by Mr. David Klein, which was edited and published in THE SEWANEE REVIEW a little more than two years ago. In these sonnets, Shakespeare unquestionably follows admitted conventions. Every one of the conceits and imagined situations may be duplicated. We need not be at all surprised, for we have already found the same thing in the Plays. But, as before, there

is also something more to be said. The sonnet love sequence had its great prototype in England in Sir Philip Sidney's "Astrophel and Stella," and noble as some of Sidney's sonnets are, tested as a sequence and individually, they fall immeasurably below Shakespeare's. Again he dares the thing most in vogue and does it better. In neither Sidney's nor Shakespeare's case does it make much difference whether these poems were transcripts of actual personal experience and suffering or not. Shakespeare was a poet and dramatist, and he was more intense in his imagination, more powerful in his intellectuality, more true in his emotions than others of his predecessors and contemporaries. Rich imagination and ripe experience were needed for the full-blooded tragedies; and while the Sonnets are notably unequal in merit, something of the same maturity rings out in the notes of the greatest of them.

I merely illustrate the magic of some of these lines, familiar and always deserving of repetition. Take the one beginning:

Full many a glorious morning have I seen. . . .
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy.

or,

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced
The rich proud cast of outworn buried age,
When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the watery main
Increasing store with loss and loss with store.

Or take this splendid quatrain with its fourth great line:

That time of year thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

As I go about the abundant woods of our Sewanee Mountain, after late October's and early November's turning of the foliage and the falling of leaves typical of the fall of all of us, and I look at the trceries of limbs and twigs, "with old December's bareness everywhere," as the Sonnet has it, suggesting in an

academic environment the Gothic architecture of adjoining choir stalls, the line recurs with a new meaning:

Bare ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang.

Finally, take this splendid example:

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd,
Deserving this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

To me Shakespeare's personality and art, while following accepted forms, burst beyond the mere shell and husk of these forms. These poems may be exercises — and it is interesting to know historically what were the conventions and types which the poet followed — but also in such studies we must take heed to remember that on this same instrument it was a new and a very real poet piping.

That I have entertained no reference to the Baconian and related theories of Shakespearean authorship will be better understood at this juncture. The theory had its origin in America, and has always been extremely popular in this country, and latterly has become so in Germany. The latest book on the subject, I believe, is one by Herr Professor Karl Bleibtreu, who seeks the authorship of the plays not in Bacon, but in the comparatively unknown Earl of Rutland.

The man who wrote these Sonnets, the early narrative poems, the plays — histories, comedies, and tragedies — was all of a piece. It is literarily inconceivable, to my mind, that he should have written the *Novum Organum* and *Magna Instauratio* or the "Essays" or have been deprived of a justiceship for avarice — all of which seems, too, of quite another piece. If there be such a

thing as personality of the author, surely the thoughts, emotions, and expressions of the greatest figure in modern literature must be such a psychological entity. Else all canons of literary criticism fail!

In the present paper I have sought to reveal this personality at the beginning of each literary species and suggest how, working in its special environment, it was evolved normally by the successful imitation of others' example and the gradual transcending of others' work. In a remaining paper I shall endeavor to ascertain some of the traits of this personality as revealed in its later work, and particularly at its fullest in "The Themes of Tragedy."

JOHN BELL HENNEMAN.

The University of the South.